

What is Religion? – Part One

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I know that there are many who would say that religion is a way to God, but nothing could be further from the truth. Religion is a poor substitute for God's requirement of us coming into a personal relationship with him and acceptance by him. The fact is that religion was first instituted by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After, in disobedience to God, they made clothes of fig leaves to cover their nakedness, but that still did not give them forgiveness with God, and so they tried to hide themselves from God when the voice of God came into the garden. What Satan had told them became reality after eating of the one tree forbidden of God. They knew fear of God, and guilt of sin. Religion becomes rebellion against God, our denial of what God requires to be accepted by him.

Religion becomes what we do and think will restore our peace with God. Just as their religion failed them, the Bible declares that our works, and religiousness is as filthy rags in God's sight, and insufficient to restore us with Him in righteousness. Romans 10:2-4 says we have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For we, being ignorant of God's righteousness, have not submitted ourselves unto the righteousness of God. The Bible says we are saved by faith, that is a gift from God; and not of works, even though we like to boast about what we are doing religiously.

We know that God confronted Adam and Eve with their sin, and took an innocent animal that did nothing worthy of death, and killed it and shed its blood, declaring that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Then He took the fig leaves from Adam and Eve and he clothed them with the skin of the sacrifice that died in their place. This pictures exactly what God has done for all of us to pay the price for us for our sins. God provided an innocent sacrifice in his one and only son the Lord Jesus Christ. God put him to death on that cross in our place, shed his blood for us, and then when we receive him and the price he paid for us, he clothes us with the righteousness of Christ. That gives us the peace of God, forgiveness of sin and sins, and assurance of eternal acceptance with him.

In Genesis 3:14-15, God foretold the coming of Jesus to that end, declaring that Satan would bruise the heel of the one born of the woman while that one would bruise Satan's head. We celebrate Christ's coming into this world, born of a virgin, the seed of a woman without a man. It is interesting to see Jesus, who is the Son of God, and God the Son, the creator of all that is, the Saviour, the Lamb of God, and the King of Kings, while here on earth put a curse of judgment upon the fig tree, because it looked like it had fruit to meet the need, but it didn't, and with that curse that tree died.

I believe that when Jesus cursed what was used to start the first religion by Adam and Eve, that he was making it perfectly clear that God does not accept religion as a way to himself. We see that although Cain, the son of Adam and Eve knew by the sacrificing of an animal and the shedding of its blood was necessary to be in standing with God. Cain saw this in his brother Abel who had right standing with God. But Cain defied coming God's one and only way, so in his defiance and rebellion against God he tried to start a new religion. He brought the best of what he had produced, the first fruits of his harvest and God rejected it. God told Cain, if you will come the way I have ordained, I will accept you and will add other blessing upon you. Cain was filled with such rage against God, that he murdered his brother Abel. What a tragedy and unfortunately that has been and is still happening today by multitudes. A holy God cannot accept any other way of forgiveness and restoration to a personal relationship with him, apart from the one and only price paid for their sins. This is so painful to us all, and requires humility on our part to accept that there is no way we can make ourselves right with him.

Are you trusting in man made religion or on faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross? As our Lord reminded his disciples, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Light, no man comes unto the Father expect after me." John 14:6